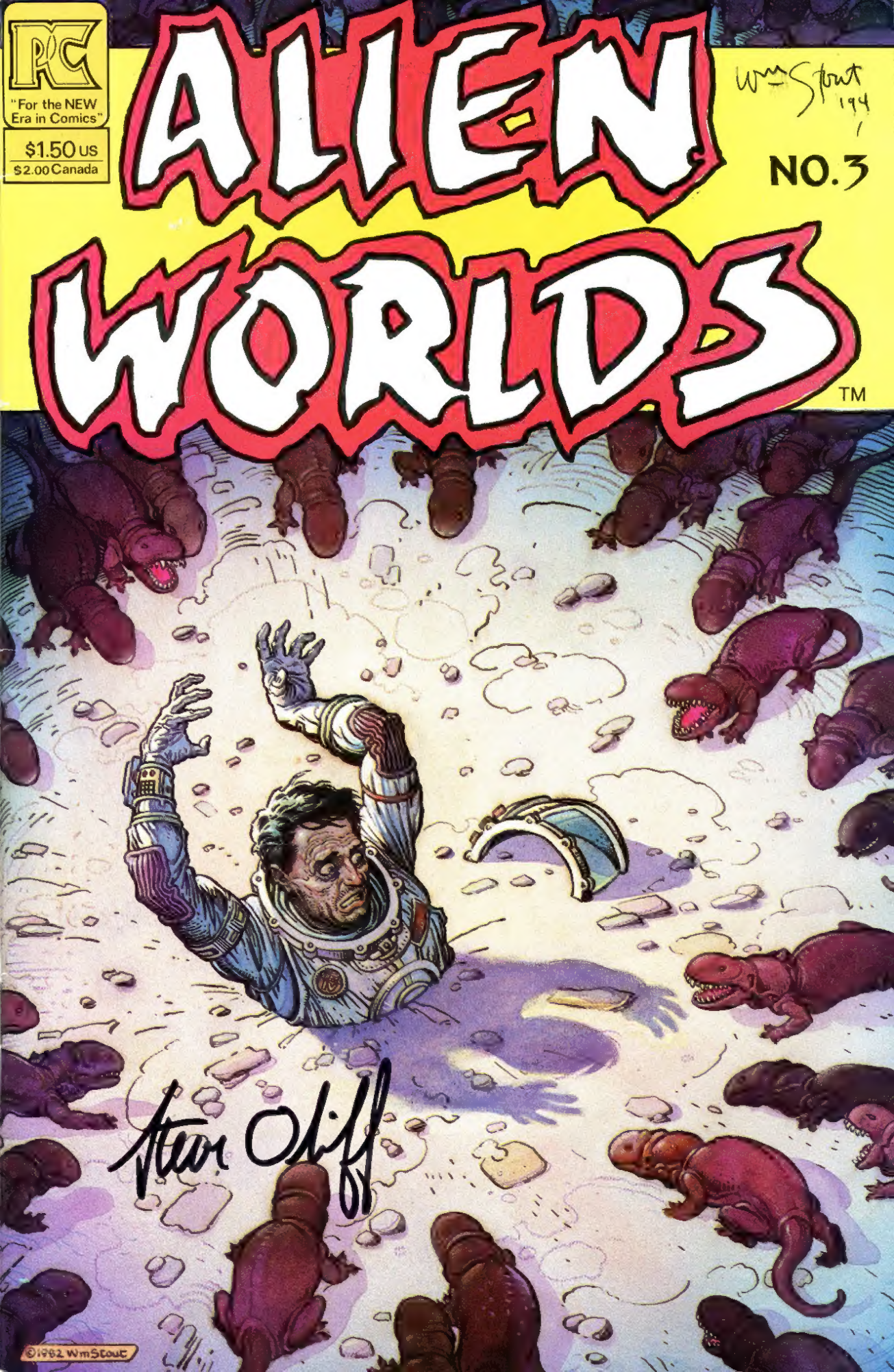
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"For the NEW Era in Comics"
$1.50 US
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ALIEN WORLDS
TM
Wm Stout 194
NO.3
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Dear Bruce,

Congratulations on *Alien Worlds* which is exactly what you intended it to be—the best thing of its kind since the glory days of EC. Artwork by Williamson, Mayerik, Redondo, and Conrad—all excellent. As for your scripting, let me just say that I have consistently enjoyed your work since I first discovered it in the pages of *Ka-Zar*. I particularly admired "Talk to Tedi." I leave you with two words of advice: GET KALUTA!

C. Jerry Kutner
North Hollywood, CA

Dear Bruce,

From cover to cover, *Alien Worlds* #1 is an excellent comic. I enjoyed all the stories. I hesitate to use the word "comic," because I do not think of *Alien Worlds* as a comic. I hope somebody out there has a name for this wonderful something.

I read about the new color-reproducing method used on the first story, and I'm in favor of it being used again. It added to the overall effect of the story.

I am looking forward to future issues of *Alien Worlds*.

Steven Thomas
South Yeater, Room 317
Warrensburg, MO 64093

Dear Mr. Jones,

When I first heard about Pacific Comics, I must admit I thought that you guys would flop. Thanks for proving me wrong. Seeing the cover for *Alien Worlds* #1 was a break. It caught my eye (I'm sure you know why). I took a chance and hoped it'd be like a *Heavy Metal*-type format. It wasn't. It was better! Being a sci-fi-horror movie fan I found the stories weird, *very* unpredictable, and overall great. The art was superbly done. You people at Pacific hooked a loyal reader. Keep up the great work. (I know I won't have to worry about that.)

Aldis Rapsys
7131 S. Richmond Ave.
Chicago, IL 60629

To the Crew of *Alien Worlds*,

Just beautiful! I have just finished with the first issue of *Alien Worlds*. All I can say is *terrific*. It's about time that someone(s) published a comic with some heart and soul in it. The stories were quite intriguing. I enjoy stories with a different twist to the ending. I liked "Talk to Tedi," and thought it was a really heart-warming. The art in this issue was impeccable-incomparable.

To Bruce Jones: I tend to agree with your philosophy of non-continuity. This tends to make for a more intriguing, more thought-provoking comic. This would also let the writers have more freedom with their ideas—more flexibility. They wouldn't have to worry about keeping the character(s) alive or not. Science fiction was not meant to be long and tedious; least of all predictable. Predictability leads to boredom. Keep up the superb work.

Don't let *Alien Worlds* become just another comic. This comic is really worth buying and reading. Hurray for Pacific—the NEW era in comics!

Carlton Lee
2476 Narcissus St.
Hon, HI 96816

Dear Bruce,

First, let me congratulate you on your two new titles. *Twisted Tales* and *Alien Worlds* compare with nothing currently being produced and I enjoy them both immensely.

Alien Worlds #2 was a top-notch production. All three stories were superb, though Dave Stevens has stolen the show once again. His art was totally magnificent! From the seductive beauty of Aurora herself, to the wonderful expressions on the silent Unk, this episode was a real gem. There was no positive indication that you were going to continue the Aurora stories, but you simply must! If there are remaining Aurora stories in the vaults, please let us see them. If not, can Dave be persuaded to continue them? Don't leave us hanging!

Gerry Woodling
228 Auburn Ave.,
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

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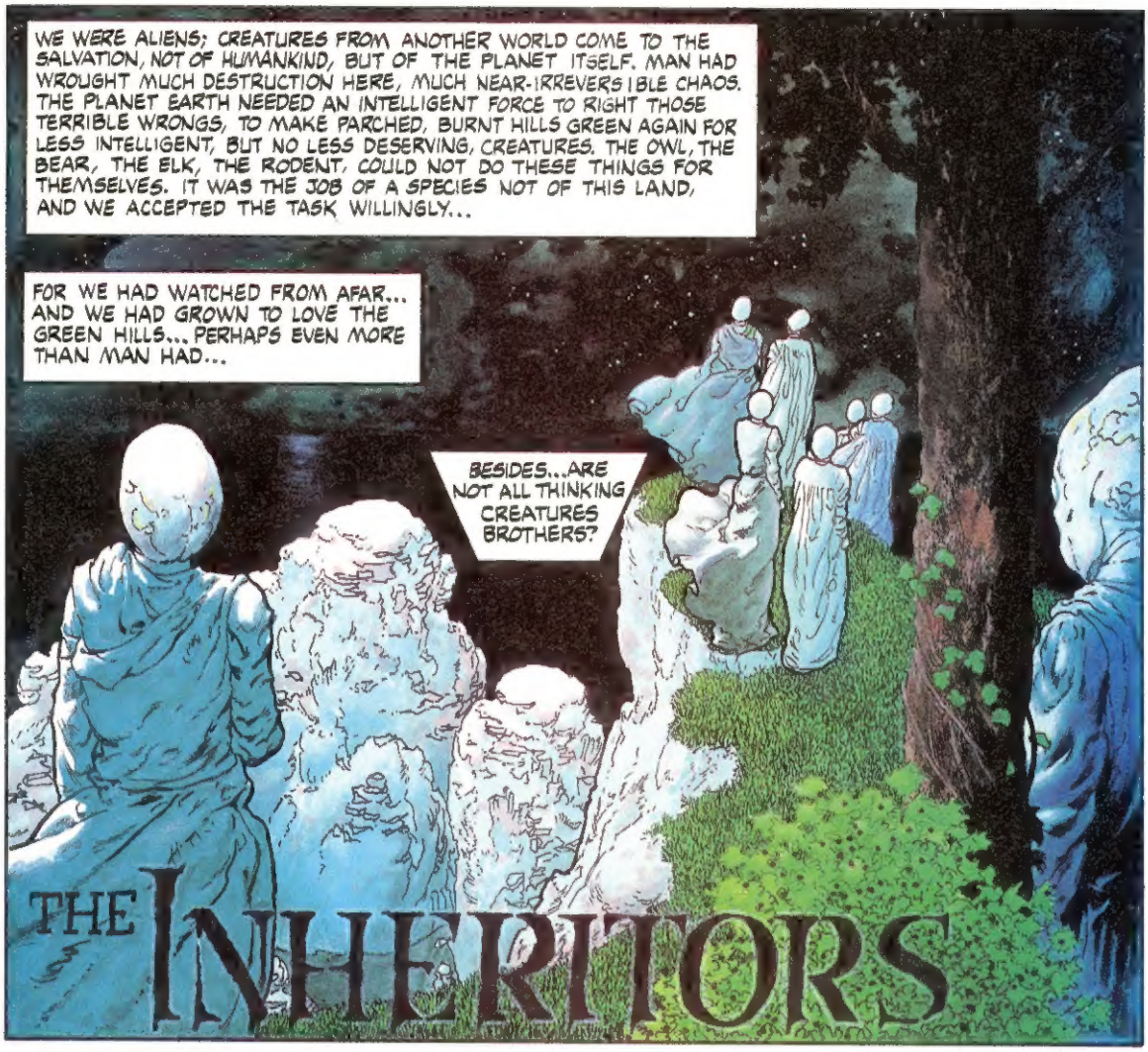
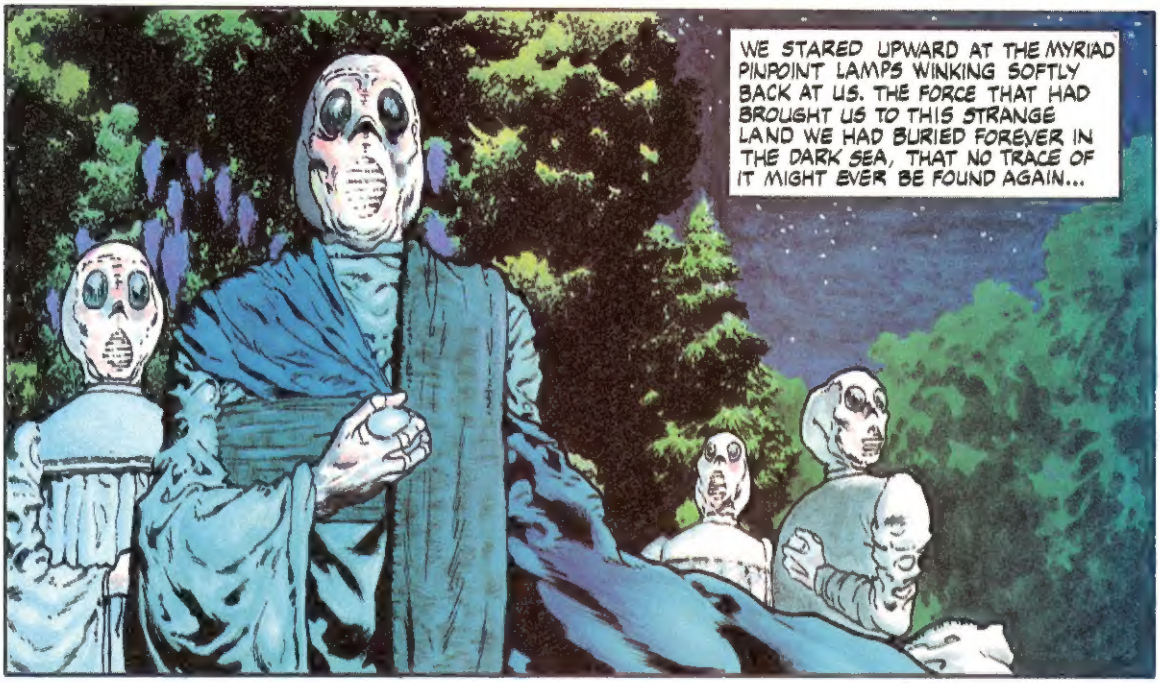




STORY: BRUCE JONES ART: SCOTT HAMPTON
Letters: Carrie McCarthy

FOR WE WERE THE INHERITORS, THE SUCCESSORS TO MAN. AND IT WAS OUR DECISION TO LOOK AND ACT AS MUCH LIKE HIM AS POSSIBLE...

WE LIVED IN THE BUBBLE, SLEPT IN THE BUBBLE, UNDERWENT OUR *OPERATIONS* IN THE BUBBLE... OPERATIONS THAT MADE US LOOK MORE AND MORE *HUMAN* AS THE WEEKS WENT BY. WE *STUDIED* IN THE BUBBLE... LEARNED THE WAYS OF MAN...

TO THAT END, WE SOUGHT TO RELINQUISH ANY TIES TO OUR HOMELAND; ANY MEMORIES OF WHENCE WE HAD COME, WHO WE WERE -- WHAT WE LOOKED LIKE! ONLY THE BUBBLE REMAINED WITH US...

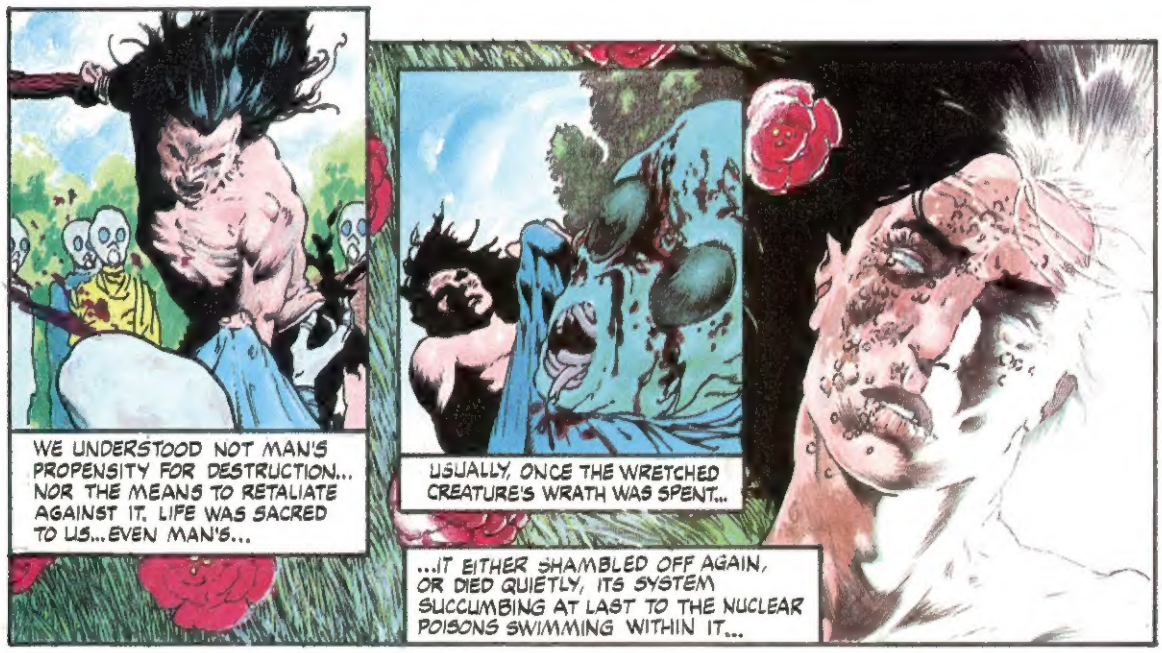
WE HAD ATTEMPTED TO CONTACT MAN BEFORE --TO WARN HIM OF THE COMING HOLOCAUST SHOULD HE CONTINUE HIS PRESENT PATH. BUT ALTHOUGH HE HEARD US, HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND US, FOR OUR LANGUAGES WERE WORLDS APART. MAN SPOKE WITH HIS *LIPS*...

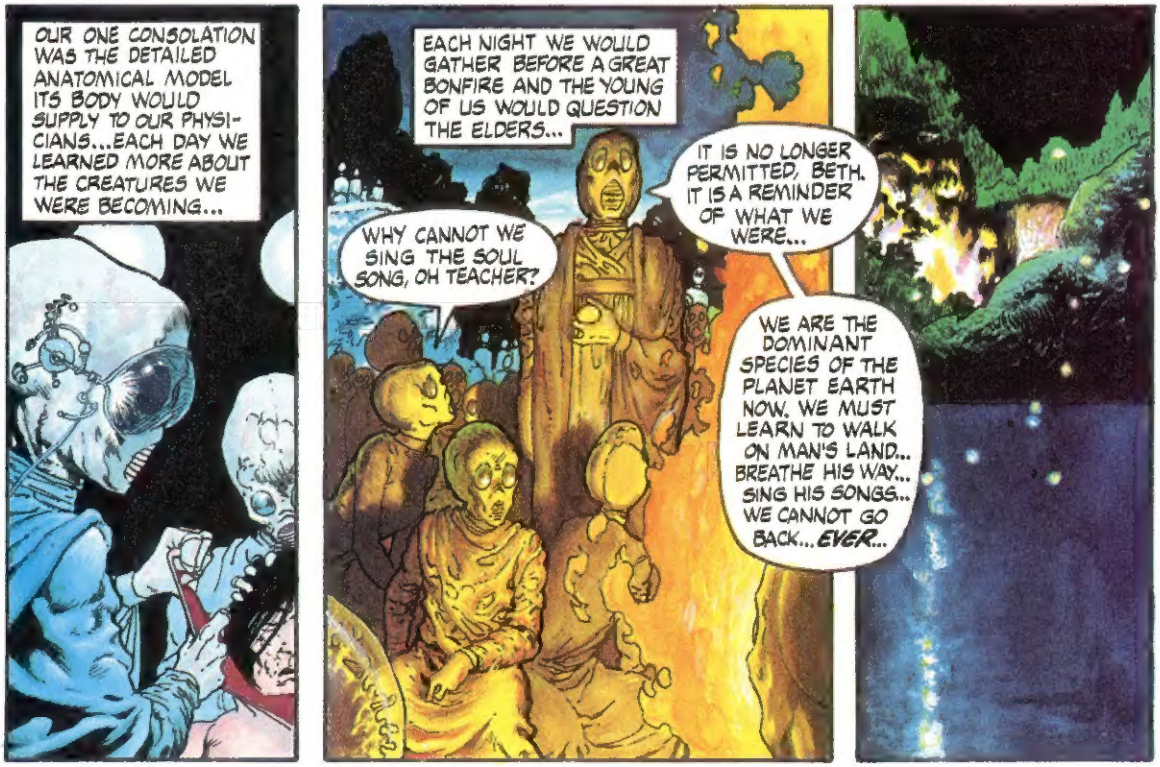
YET MAN HAD DEVELOPED WELL ON HIS PLANET, COME FAR BEFORE THE GREAT FIRESTORMS. TO BE AS SUCCESSFUL AS MAN, WE HAD TO BECOME *LIKE* MAN. WE NEEDED FIVE FINGERS... STRONG LEGS. EXTERNAL GENITALIA... AND A NEW WAY OF *BREATHING*...

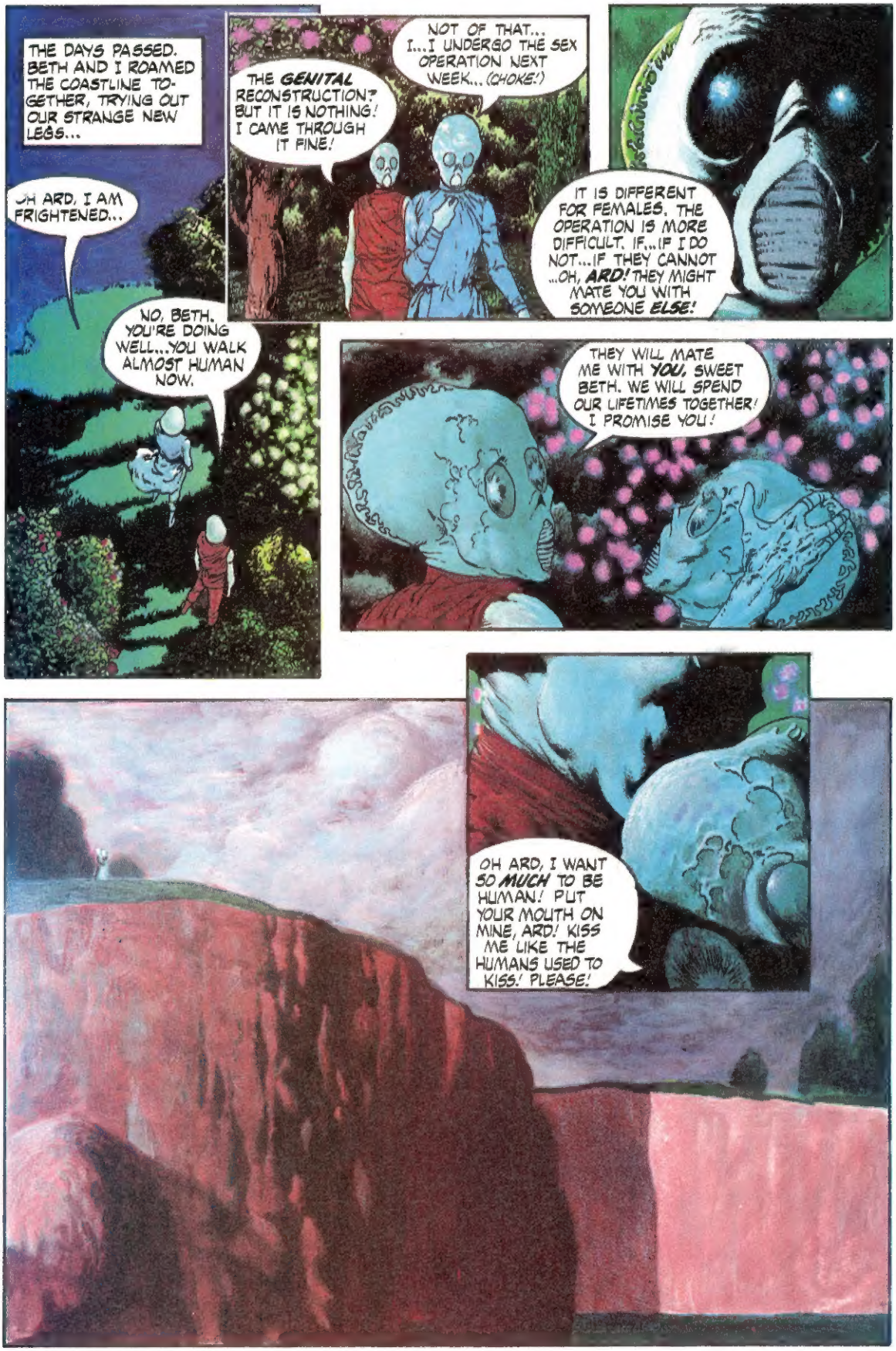
THE PHYSICIANS WHO CAME WITH US SPENT MANY HOURS AT THE SURGICAL TABLES. IT WAS SOMETIMES PAINFUL AND ALWAYS DIFFICULT FOR THERE WERE ALMOST NO LIVING MEN TO SERVE AS MODELS...

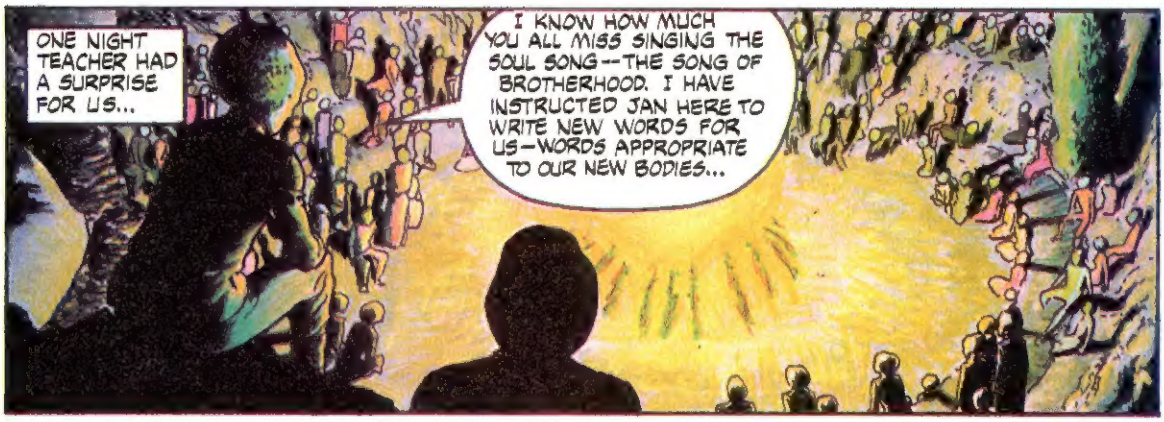
...ALMOST...

ONCE IN A GREAT WHILE, ONE WOULD STUMBLE INTO OUR CAMP... IT WAS ALWAYS A TIME OF GREAT SADNESS... AND DANGER...
YAGGHHH!


WE UNDERSTOOD NOT MAN'S PROPENSITY FOR DESTRUCTION... NOR THE MEANS TO RETALIATE AGAINST IT. LIFE WAS SACRED TO US...EVEN MAN'S...
USUALLY, ONCE THE WRETCHED CREATURE'S WRATH WAS SPENT...
...IT EITHER SHAMBLED OFF AGAIN, OR DIED QUIETLY, ITS SYSTEM SUCCUMBING AT LAST TO THE NUCLEAR POISONS SWIMMING WITHIN IT...


OUR ONE CONSOLATION WAS THE DETAILED ANATOMICAL MODEL ITS BODY WOULD SUPPLY TO OUR PHYSICIANS...EACH DAY WE LEARNED MORE ABOUT THE CREATURES WE WERE BECOMING...
EACH NIGHT WE WOULD GATHER BEFORE A GREAT BONFIRE AND THE YOUNG OF US WOULD QUESTION THE ELDERS...
WHY CANNOT WE SING THE SOUL SONG, OH TEACHER?
IT IS NO LONGER PERMITTED, BETH. IT IS A REMINDER OF WHAT WE WERE...
WE ARE THE DOMINANT SPECIES OF THE PLANET EARTH NOW. WE MUST LEARN TO WALK ON MAN'S LAND... BREATHE HIS WAY... SING HIS SONGS... WE CANNOT GO BACK... EVER...


THE DAYS PASSED. BETH AND I ROAMED THE COASTLINE TOGETHER, TRYING OUT OUR STRANGE NEW LEGS...
OH ARD, I AM FRIGHTENED...
NO, BETH. YOU'RE DOING WELL...YOU WALK ALMOST HUMAN NOW.
THE GENITAL RECONSTRUCTION? BUT IT IS NOTHING! I CAME THROUGH IT FINE!
NOT OF THAT... I...I UNDERGO THE SEX OPERATION NEXT WEEK... (CHOKE!)
IT IS DIFFERENT FOR FEMALES. THE OPERATION IS MORE DIFFICULT. IF...IF I DO NOT...IF THEY CANNOT ...OH, ARD! THEY MIGHT MATE YOU WITH SOMEONE ELSE!
THEY WILL MATE ME WITH YOU, SWEET BETH. WE WILL SPEND OUR LIFETIMES TOGETHER! I PROMISE YOU!
OH ARD, I WANT SO MUCH TO BE HUMAN! PUT YOUR MOUTH ON MINE, ARD! KISS ME LIKE THE HUMANS USED TO KISS! PLEASE!


ONE NIGHT TEACHER HAD A SURPRISE FOR US...
I KNOW HOW MUCH YOU ALL MISS SINGING THE SOUL SONG--THE SONG OF BROTHERHOOD. I HAVE INSTRUCTED JAN HERE TO WRITE NEW WORDS FOR US--WORDS APPROPRIATE TO OUR NEW BODIES...

OH LET US RETURN TO THE GREEN ROLLING HILLS, OH LET US RUN TO EMBRACE THEM; OH LET US GO FORTH THROUGH THE DEEP YELLOW GRASS, FIND THE WIND AND THE SUN AND CHASE THEM...

OH LET US STAY CLOSE IN THIS WORLD OF OUR BIRTH, OH LET OUR SIX BILLION BE ONE; THROUGH THIS SONG THAT WE SING, IN THE CLEAR COUNTRY AIR, OVER ENDLESS GREEN HILLS THAT WE LOVE...

THE NEW SONG WAS MET WITH GENERAL ENTHUSIASM, BUT AS THE MEETING DISPERSED...
BETH ...YOU'RE TROUBLED..

WE LOOKED OUT TO SEA, TO THE BILLIONS OF TWINKLING WORLDS FAR AWAY...SO VERY FAR AWAY...
I DON'T LIKE THE NEW WORDS, ARD...I MISS THE OLD ONES...I MISS OUR BEAUTIFUL HOME. IT IS HOT AND DRY HERE...

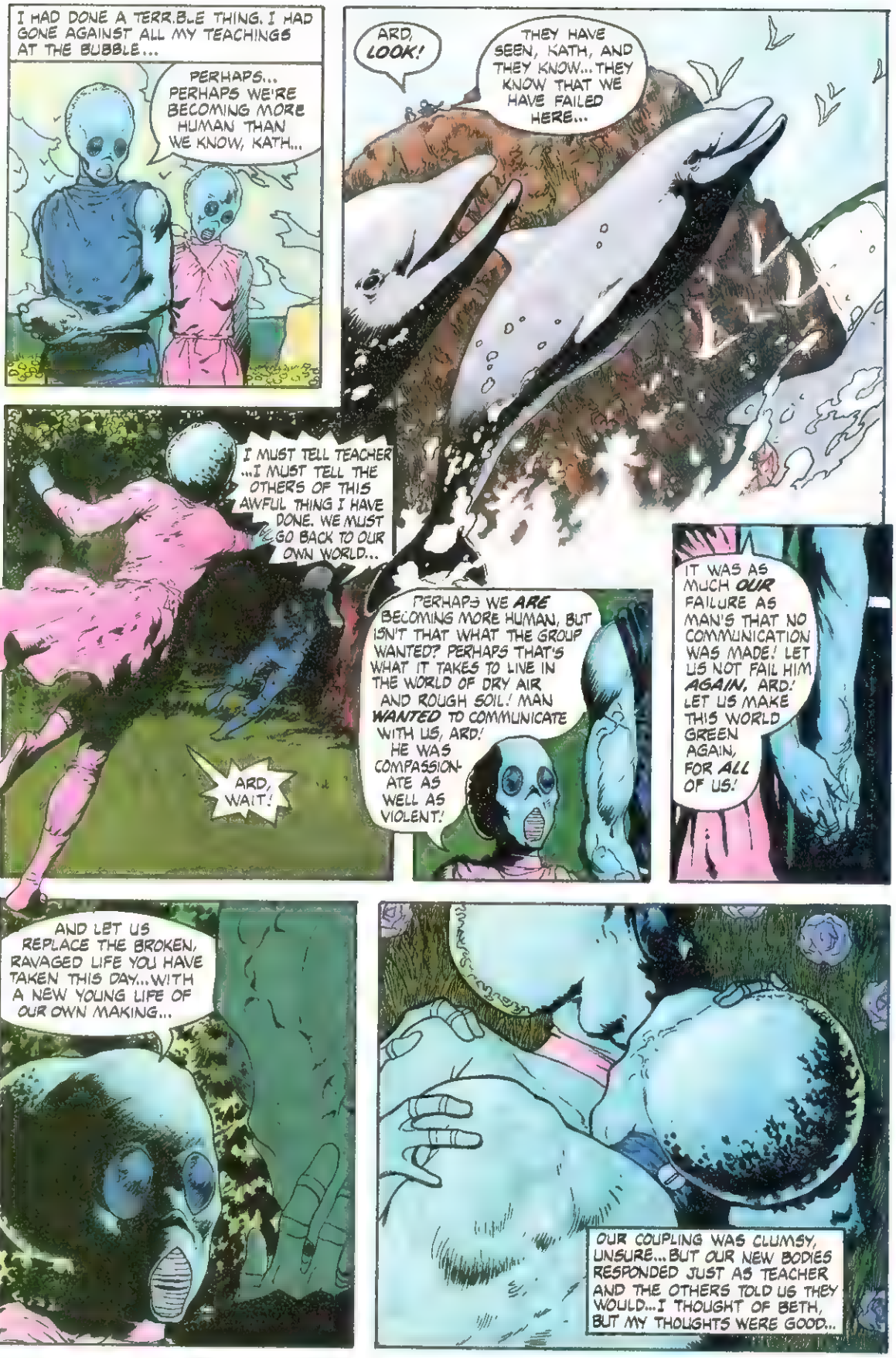
MAN DID NOTHING FOR US... WHY SHOULD WE CLEAN UP AFTER HIS MISTAKES?...
ALL WORLDS ARE LINKED, BETH. IF THERE HAD ONLY BEEN TIME, MAN WOULD HAVE SEEN THIS.

TOMORROW I UNDERGO MY SEX OPERATION...
...I HOPE THERE WILL BE TIME FOR US, ARD...

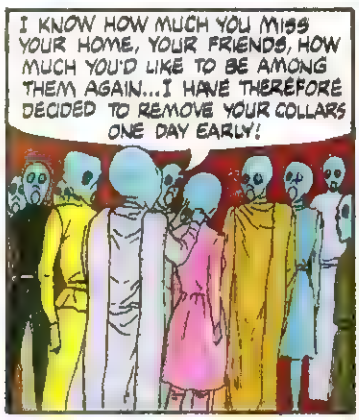
I WAS OUT GATHERING FRUIT WITH THE OTHERS THE NEXT DAY WHEN ANOTHER OF THE CRAZED HUMANS ATTACKED...
AGGH!
COMMIE BASTARDS! DROP MISSILES ON US, WILL YA!
NO!
ARD!
BUT--
WE ARE CREATURES OF PEACE, ARD...DO NOT INTERFERE..
COMMIE SCUM! THAT'LL LEARN YA! GOTTA KEEP THE NATION PURE!
ARD! ARD! COME QUICKLY!

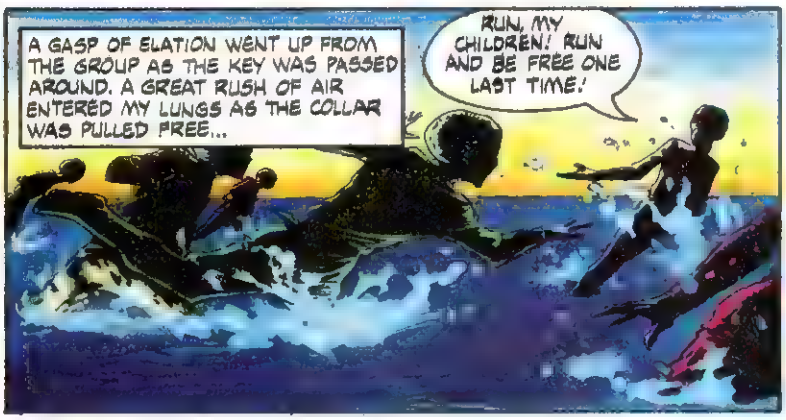
IT'S BETH! SHE --SHE DIDN'T PASS THE OPERATION! SHE'S LEFT HER SICKBAY BED! AND SHE WAS BLEEDING BADLY!
JAN, WHA--?
I CURSED MY NEW EARTH LEGS...CURSED THE ROUGH SOIL UNDER MY FEET...
BETH! BETH!
THE AIR BURNED MY THROAT--A THROAT NOT ACCUSTOMED TO BREATHING THIS WAY...
BETH!
...BETH...
SHE HAD RIPPED FRENZIEDLY AT HER ALIEN CLOTHING...A CLOTHING SHE HAD ALWAYS HATED. ONLY THE COLLAR REMAINED TIGHT ABOUT HER THROAT...
I BEGGED THE OTHERS TO SEND HER BACK HOME FOR A DECENT BURIAL... BUT THAT WAS IMPOSSIBLE, THEY SAID...EARTH WAS HER HOME NOW...

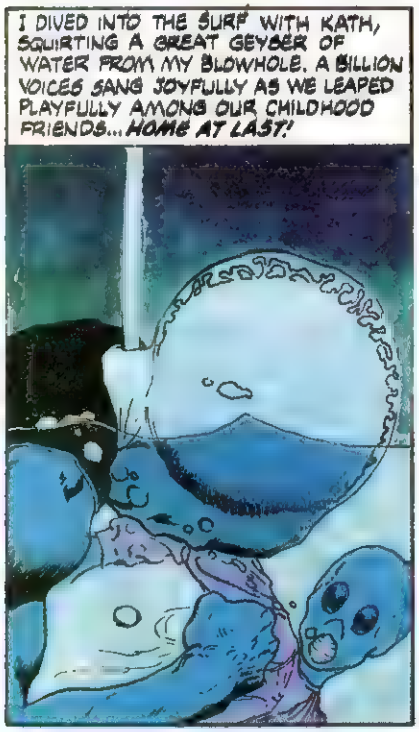
NEXT MORNING, TEACHER CALLED TO ME...
THIS IS KATH, ARD. SHE WILL BE YOUR MATE. THE TIME HAS COME FOR YOUR COUPLING. THIS WORLD NEEDS NEW CHILDREN...
I TOOK KATH'S HAND RELUCTANTLY AS WAS MY DUTY...
NOT THAT WAY, ARD...CAN'T WE GO TO THE CLIFFS?
MY THOUGHTS WERE WITH BETH...YET KATH WAS SWEET AND GENTLE. I TRIED TO THINK ONLY OF MY BIOLOGY LESSONS AS SHE EMBRACED ME THERE ON THE CRAG...
AGGH!
NO!
EEEEEE!
(CHOKE!) ...ARD!
NO!
CLOMP!


I HAD DONE A TERRIBLE THING. I HAD GONE AGAINST ALL MY TEACHINGS AT THE BUBBLE...
PERHAPS... PERHAPS WE'RE BECOMING MORE HUMAN THAN WE KNOW, KATH...
ARD, LOOK!
THEY HAVE SEEN, KATH, AND THEY KNOW... THEY KNOW THAT WE HAVE FAILED HERE...
I MUST TELL TEACHER ...I MUST TELL THE OTHERS OF THIS AWFUL THING I HAVE DONE. WE MUST GO BACK TO OUR OWN WORLD...
ARD, WAIT!
PERHAPS WE ARE BECOMING MORE HUMAN, BUT ISN'T THAT WHAT THE GROUP WANTED? PERHAPS THAT'S WHAT IT TAKES TO LIVE IN THE WORLD OF DRY AIR AND ROUGH SOIL! MAN WANTED TO COMMUNICATE WITH US, ARD! HE WAS COMPASSIONATE AS WELL AS VIOLENT!
IT WAS AS MUCH OUR FAILURE AS MAN'S THAT NO COMMUNICATION WAS MADE! LET US NOT FAIL HIM AGAIN, ARD! LET US MAKE THIS WORLD GREEN AGAIN, FOR ALL OF US!
AND LET US REPLACE THE BROKEN, RAVAGED LIFE YOU HAVE TAKEN THIS DAY...WITH A NEW YOUNG LIFE OF OUR OWN MAKING...
OUR COUPLING WAS CLUMSY, UNSURE... BUT OUR NEW BODIES RESPONDED JUST AS TEACHER AND THE OTHERS TOLD US THEY WOULD... I THOUGHT OF BETH, BUT MY THOUGHTS WERE GOOD...

LATER, WE DESCENDED THE HILL TO THE BEACH, WHERE TEACHER WAS CALLING ANOTHER MEETING...
TOMORROW YOU WILL UNDERGO THE FINAL OPERATION, LINKING YOU FOREVER WITH THE HUMAN RACE: THE OPERATION TO SEAL YOUR BREATHING HOLE.


I KNOW HOW MUCH YOU MISS YOUR HOME, YOUR FRIENDS, HOW MUCH YOU'D LIKE TO BE AMONG THEM AGAIN...I HAVE THEREFORE DECIDED TO REMOVE YOUR COLLARS ONE DAY EARLY!


A GASP OF ELATION WENT UP FROM THE GROUP AS THE KEY WAS PASSED AROUND. A GREAT RUSH OF AIR ENTERED MY LUNGS AS THE COLLAR WAS PULLED FREE...
RUN, MY CHILDREN! RUN AND BE FREE ONE LAST TIME!


I DIVED INTO THE SURF WITH KATH, SQUIRTING A GREAT GEYSER OF WATER FROM MY BLOWHOLE. A BILLION VOICES SANG JOYFULLY AS WE LEAPED PLAYFULLY AMONG OUR CHILDHOOD FRIENDS... HOME AT LAST!

O LET US RETURN TO THE GREEN ROLLING WAVES, O LET US SWIM TO EMBRACE THEM; O LET US GO FORTH THROUGH THE DEEP BLUE BRINE, FIND THE WIND AND THE SUN AND CHASE THEM...

O LET US STAY CLOSE IN THIS WORLD OF OUR BIRTH, O LET OUR SIX BILLION BE ONE; THROUGH THIS SONG THAT WE SING IN THE CLEAR OCEAN AIR, OVER ENDLESS GREEN WAVES THAT WE LOVE...
L. SCOTT HAMPTON '85

Somerset Holmes

ALONE
VULNERABLE
TERRIFIED

She doesn't know
who she is
Where she came from

or why they're trying to kill her!

JONES & ANDERSON **THIS SUMMER FROM** RC

"For the NEW Era in Comics"

PI IN THE SKY

A GOOD MORNING. A GOOD DAY FOR THE HUNT! ***GREEN DRAGON*** EASED BACK IN HIS SHOCK CHAIR WITH A GRIN, ADJUSTING HIS GLARE GOGGLES, AND PUSHED THE JOY STICK INTO THE PINK ZONE. HIS ***PHANTOM SEVEN X94 SABRE SHARK*** SHRIEKED EXALTANTLY FROM ITS TURBO-THRUSTERS, DISCHARGED A THREAD OF GREEN VAPOR, AND BANKED SOFTLY OVER THE PURPLE MOUNTAIN TOPS AT THREE TIMES THE SPEED OF SOUND.

IT WAS HIGH TIME THE ***PRINCESS*** WAS BACK WHERE SHE BELONGED, HIGH TIME. HE WATCHED HER TRIM FIGURE WALKING GRACEFULLY AMONG THE MARBLE HALLS OF HIS DOMAIN. HIGH TIME SHE CURLED UP BESIDE HIM IN BED AT NIGHT... AND HE NUZZLED HER SLIM NECK, CARESSED HER FIRM FLANKS...

JUST SOUTH OF MIRA MESA HE GOT TIRED OF THE ***PHANTOM SEVEN X94*** AND PUNCHED IN THE GREEN-AND-YELLOW BUTTON ON THE CEILING CONSOLE ABOVE HIS HEAD: TIME FOR SOME ***SKY WRITING!***

THE ***PHANTOM SEVEN*** RETRACTED ITS SLUICE-WINGS, ARCHED ITS ALLOY BACK, KICKED OUT A PAIR OF RAZOR-SHARP CUTTER FOILS, AND SPROUTED EIGHT ALUMINUM HYDRO-TUBES BENEATH ITS REAR THRUSTERS.

ALL OF WHICH BEGAN TO POUR A KNIFE-EDGED STREAM OF PURE, SPARKLING SNOW-VAPOR. ***GREEN DRAGON*** EASED INTO THE JOY STICK AND BEGAN TO WRITE:

GREEN DRAGON LAUGHED HOLLOWLY WITHIN HIS GLEAMING SHOCK HELMET. WAIT UNTIL THAT JACK-EARED SWAMP RAT SAW THIS!

THE RED BEAR STINKS!

HE WAS JUST SHOVING HER BACK INTO G-SPEED AND PREPARING TO LEVEL OUT, WHEN THE FIRST BOLT OF LASER FIRE SEARED ACROSS HIS BOW.

BASTARD! SNEAKING UP ON ME!

GREEN DRAGON WOULD BARELY HAVE TIME TO HIT THE ORANGE CONSOLE BUTTONS BEFORE ***SKYWRITER*** SMASHED INTO THE MOUNTAIN RANGE BELOW. ALUMINUM HYDRO-TUBES SNAPPED BACK, THE LIGHT-HEARTED CUTTER FOILS RETRACTED, REPLACING THEMSELVES WITH A SERIES OF HUGE ***VIPER-FOIL*** FIGHTER WINGS, ALL SIX BRISTLING WITH AN ARMADA OF LASER CANNONS AND VEEP-TORPEDOS. THE GREEN HULL OF THE ***SKY-WRITER*** VANISHED TOO, AND IN ITS PLACE WAS THE SAVAGE SWEEPING LINES OF A ***MARK NINE CLOUD WHOMPER!***

STORY: BRUCE JONES ART: KEN STEACY
Letters: Carrie McCarthy

CHRIST! HOW HAD **RED BEAR** MANAGED THAT?

AND NOW **GREEN DRAGON** SAW HIM--SKIMMING SMARTLY ALONG BENEATH THAT LINE OF CUMULUS NIMBUS: IN A BRAND NEW **SAND SHARK 580!**--WITH MAGNA-DRIVE AND BLISTER BOMBS!

NO TIME TO CONTEMPLATE THAT NOW, THE BIG RED **SHARK** WAS PRIMING ITS VACUU-RIFLES AND GETTING OFF A SALVO AT HIS STAR-BOARD STABLIZER! NOTHING TO DO BUT THROW HER INTO FULCRUM-JUMP AND HOPE THE LOWER SHIELDS HELD!

"HEH-HEH-HEH! S'MATTER, **GREEN DRAGON?** CATCH YOU NAPPING? YOU'LL HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN THAT IF YOU WANT THE **PRINCESS** BACK!"

GREEN DRAGON SKIPPED ACROSS THE LUSH VALLEY ON TWO WINGS, BANKED OVER THE LINE OF FIR TREES BY LAKE MOOSE, AND SPIRALED STRAIGHT INTO THE SUN TO TRY AND GAIN TIME. TOO LATE. ONE OF **RED BEAR'S** BLISTER BOMBS DISINTEGRATED HIS FORWARD FOIL. HE WASN'T IN SERIOUS INTERNAL TROUBLE, BUT THAT FOIL WOULD CUT HIM BACK TO HALF-SPEED! DAMN!

"GUESS **AGAIN,** YOU PATHETIC CREEP! YOUR FOLLOWING TOO **CLOSE!**"

AND IT WAS TRUE! **RED BEAR,** PRESS-ING HIS ADVANTAGE, HAD ALL BUT CRAWLED UP **GREEN'S** TAIL PIPE'S, BUT THE OLD **DRAGON** WASN'T ABOUT TO GO DOWN WITHOUT A FIGHT!

HE PUNCHED IN MAROON AND THE **MARK NINE CLOUD WHOMPER** CONTRACTED UPON ITSELF IN A MICRO-SECOND! WHAT EMERGED WAS A VEHICLE THAT AMAZED EVEN THE **DRAGON!** DROP-PING LIKE A STONE STRAIGHT TOWARD MOOSE LAKE, THE **CLOUD WHOMPER** REMATERIALIZED IN A BURST OF MULTICOLORED HUES AND TERRIFYING ARMAMENTS, SLEEK PONTOONS SPANKING THE LAPPING WAVES OF MOOSE LAKE LIKE THE CRACK OF A GIANT HAND.

A **CYLIS SEVEN RIVER RAKER!** THE FASTEST, MOST DEADLY WATER-CRAFT IN THE UNIVERSE!

PANCAKING DOWN ON A LAKE WAS THE LAST THING **RED BEAR** HAD EXPECTED FROM HIM. THIS WOULD GIVE THE **DRAGON** NOT ONLY TIME TO MAKE NECESSARY DAMAGE REPAIRS, BUT FLOATING HERE ON THE ROCKY SURFACE HELPED SAVE PRECIOUS ENERGY! NOW ALL HE HAD TO DO WAS--

WHAM!

GREEN DRAGON WAS NEARLY KNOCKED FROM THE CONSOLE. A SHRIEK OF ANGRY STATIC ROCKED THROUGH HIS PHONES. THE WHOLE WINKING BOARD BEFORE HIM TREMBLED. WITH PANICKY EYES HE LOOKED TO THE VIEW SCREEN.

A LONG CIGAR-SHAPED GLISTENING OBJECT WAS RISING FROM THE TURBULENT WATERS DIRECTLY AHEAD OF HIM. ALREADY ANOTHER DEADLY TOM-CAT TORPEDO WAS SPEEDING TOWARD THE GENTLY-HEAVING **RIVER RAKER!** BLAST THAT **RED BEAR,** HE'D GONE AND MANEUVERED BEHIND HIS **BACK!**

WHILE THE **DRAGON** HAD BEEN CONFIDENTLY SMIRKING HERE ON LAKE MOOSE, THE **BEAR** HAD CONVERTED HIS **SAND SHARK** INTO A **CORAL CRACKER 10-FORTY** COMPLETE WITH UNDERWATER RETRO-RAMS AND AN ADAMANTINE DORSAL CUTTER!

NO TIME TO **THINK!** ONLY TO **ACT!** HIS LEFT HAND SHOT OUT, YANKED DOWN ON THE PEARL-COATED **EMERGENCY-6** TOGGLE AND SHUT OFF ALL THE PROTECTIVE SCREENS AT ONCE. THIS LEFT HIM WIDE OPEN TO IRREPARABLE DAMAGE FROM ATTACK, BUT IT ALSO CUT HIS CHAMELEON CENTERS TO ZERO SPEED.

THE BIG ROTO BLADES SPRANG OUT OF THE TOP OF THE **RIVER RAKER'S** MAIN DECKS, THE SHIP LURCHED VIOLENTLY, AND THE **RED BEAR'S** DEADLY **CORAL CRUNCHER** PASSED BENEATH HIS PONTOONS HARMLESSLY IN A HISS OF OUTRAGED SPRAY.

QUICK NOW, WHILE THE **BEAR** WAS OFF-GUARD: LOOSEN A BANK OF BILE BOMBS ON HIS POOP AND CUT FREE OF THE ATMOSPHERE! IN SECONDS THE DRAGON WAS STREAKING CONFIDENTLY THROUGH THE STRATOSPHERE AGAIN WHILE THE BEAR WALLOWED IN A CLOUD OF PUTRID GAS: MORE HUMILIATION THAN HARM, PERHAPS, BUT IT GAINED HIM PRECIOUS SECONDS!

HARDLY TIME FOR BACK-PATTING, THOUGH; UP ON **DRAGON'S** STERN, GAINING FAST WAS THE BIGGEST, MEANEST, **BULL DOG BASHER** THE **DRAGON** HAD EVER SEEN! OLD **BEAR-BUTT** WAS CERTAINLY QUICK WITH THE BUTTONS TODAY!

ONLY ONE THING TO DO: CHANGE THE CUMBERSOME **RIVER RAKER** INTO A **NASA NEEDLE NUDGER** AND MAKE FOR THE GRAND CANYON! MAYBE THERE HE COULD CHANGE THE HUNTED INTO THE HUNTER ONCE MORE! A PUNCH OF THE BUTTON, A 90 DEGREE DRIVE, AND THE **GREEN DRAGON** FOUND HIMSELF WHISKING HAPPILY ALONG WITHIN THE NARROW CANYONS. BY GOD THE PRINCESS WOULD BE HIS TODAY YET!

HA-HA! THE **DRAGON** ZIPPED ALONG WITH EASE, DODGING EVERY SHOT THE **BEAR** HAD TO OFFER! THE OLD POOP COULD HARDLY KEEP UP! IN FACT--IN FACT HE...SEEMED TO BE **WOBBLING** A LITTLE BIT...

...D-DRAGON... C-CAN'T H-HOLD HER... BLACKING OUT...

HUH? WHAT'S THE MATTER? IS THIS A RUSE, **RED BEAR?**

...CAN'T SEE... B-BOBBY... HELP...

GREEN DRAGON JERKED OFF HIS SHOCK HELMET, REVEALING THE AGED AND WRINKLED FACE OF A BALD-HEADED MAN IN HIS EIGHTIES.

HE PUSHED AWAY FROM THE 'CONSOLE' IN THE CORNER OF HIS BEDROOM AND AIMED HIS CANE TOWARD THE HALL. HE PUSHED THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR OF HIS SINGED LITTLE DUPLEX AND LIMPED DOWN THE WOODEN RAMP TO THE STREET.

ACROSS THE RUBBLE-STREW SIDEWALKS GREEN DRAGON PUSHED HIS AGED FORM. AT LAST HE CONVERGED ON A LITTLE SINGED-BRICK HOUSE AT THE END OF THE BLOCK.

DAN! DAN! IT'S ME, BOBBY! I'M HERE!

HE DARTS INSIDE. **RED BEAR** WAS AT HIS CONSOLE, SLUMPED FORWARD, BARELY BREATHING. HIS 'SHOCK HELMET' OFF, HIS WRINKLED, PASTY FACE ALMOST BLUE. HIS FINGER STILL REACHING FOR THE YELLOW BUTTON.

GREEN DRAGON SAT QUIETLY BESIDE **RED BEAR'S** GARDEN GRAVE, STARING AT THE RADIO-ACTIVE SKY. IT HURT HIS EYES. HE DIDN'T WANT TO LOOK UP AT **THAT** SKY, HE WANTED TO LOOK AT THE SKY ON THE CONSOLE, HE WANTED TO SIT BEHIND THE VIEWSCREEN OF THE **PHANTOM SEVEN X94** OR THE **CYLIS SEVEN RIVER RAKER** AND DO BATTLE WITH THE **RED BEAR**. BUT THAT WAS NOT TO BE...EVER AGAIN. THE RED BEAR WAS GONE...

A COLD, WET NOSE THRUST INTO HIS PALM. HE LOOKED DOWN AT THE **PRINCESS'** SAD BROWN EYES AND SCRATCHED THE BIG IRISH SETTER BEHIND THE EARS.

COME ON, GIRL. GUESS YOU'RE GOING TO BE WITH ME FOR GOOD NOW...

HE STARTED HOME, **PRINCESS** TROTTING ALONGSIDE..."PURPLE BUTTON..." HE FROZE. **PURPLE BUTTON!** BUT THERE **WERE** NO PURPLE BUTTONS ON **RED BEAR'S** CONSOLE--NOT UNLESS HE'D **INSTALLED** ONE!

DAMN HEART... SORRY TO LEAVE YOU LIKE THIS, OLD MAN... TAKE CARE OF THE **PRINCESS...**

DAN, NO! YOU **CAN'T** DIE! WHAT'LL I **DO??**

THE OLD LIPS BARELY UTTER THE WORDS...THE FINAL WORDS:

...PURPLE BUTTON...

THE VIEW-SCREEN LEAPT INTO LIFE!

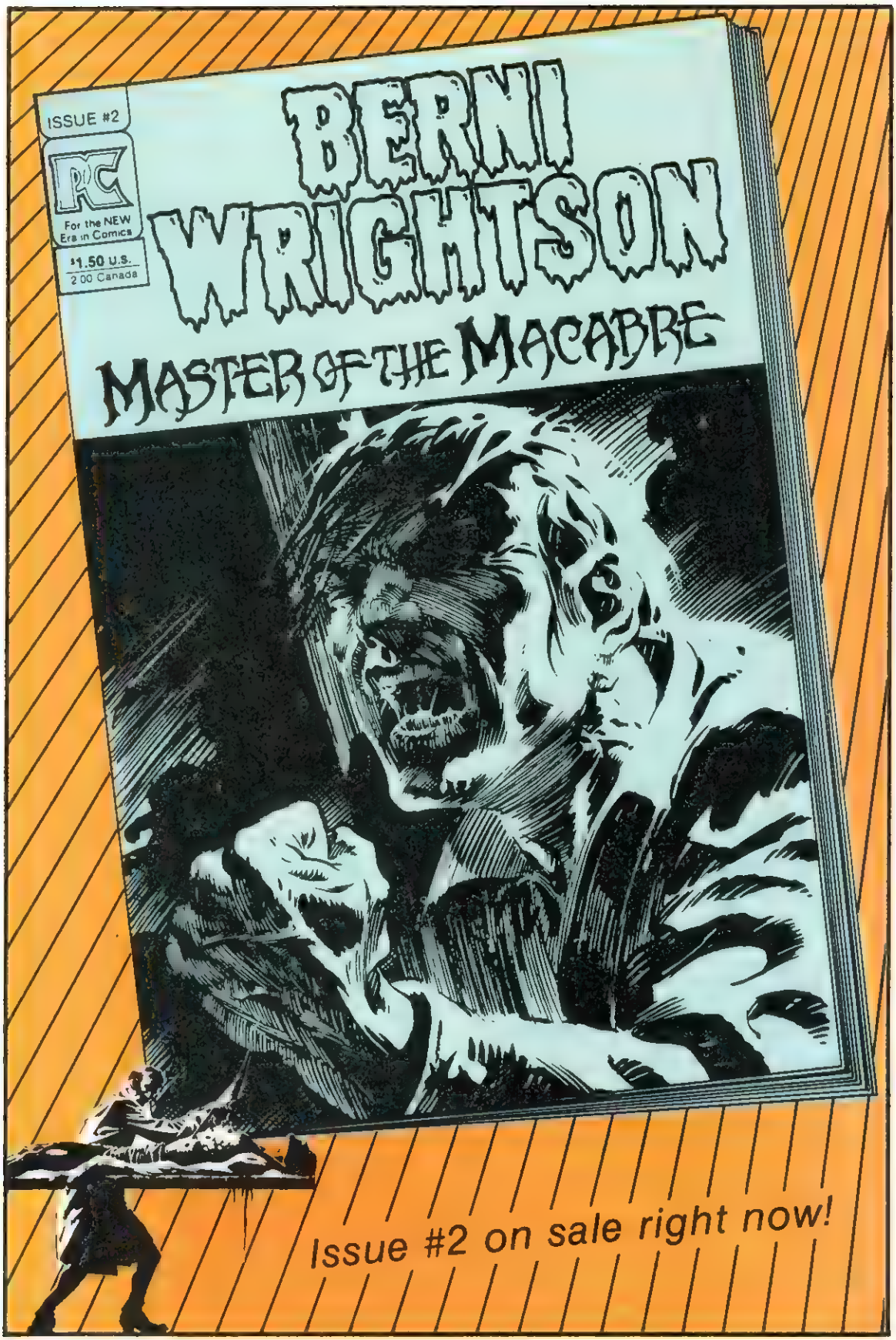
GREEN DRAGON LIMPED BACK TO THE BEAR'S HOUSE FRANTICALLY. INSIDE, HE LOCATED THE LITTLE LAVENDER STUD AND PRESSED IT.

HE WAS IN THE **CORAL CRACKER** SKIMMING SWIFTLY OVER THE SURFACE OF LAKE MOOSE! **A RECORDING! RED BEAR** HAD MADE **RECORDINGS** OF **ALL** THEIR DOGFIGHTS TOGETHER! AND THERE MUST HAVE BEEN **HUNDREDS** OF THEM! ENOUGH TO LAST FOR MONTHS, YEARS! **RED BEAR** WASN'T GONE, HE WAS ALIVE AND WELL RIGHT HERE IN THE **CONSOLE!**

GREEN DRAGON LET OUT A WHOOP AND WENT LIMPING FRANTICALLY OUT THE DOOR AGAIN TOWARD HOME. **PRINCESS** BARKED EXCITEDLY BESIDE HIM. GOOD OLD **RED BEAR!** HE MUST HAVE KNOWN FOR **MONTHS** THAT HE HAD A BAD HEART! HE PLANNED IT THIS WAY!

BEFORE HE DARTED BACK INSIDE HIS OWN LITTLE DUPLEX, **GREEN DRAGON** GLANCED UP AT THE UGLY, BOILING, BLOOD-COLORED RADIO-ACTIVE SKY. THE CLOUDS WERE THICK AND GREEN AND PREGNANT WITH POISON.

GREEN DRAGON CHUCKLED TO THE **PRINCESS.** A GOOD MORNING! A GOOD DAY FOR THE HUNT!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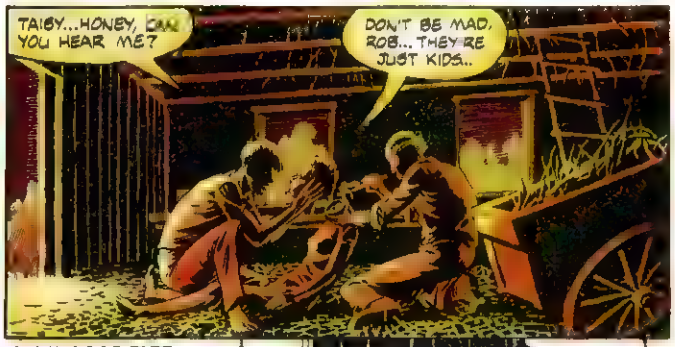
BUT MOSTLY WE LOVED THE ROCKETS...AH THE ROCKETS! AND MOSTLY WE LOVED THE BIG SILVER NEEDLE...
I SEE HER ROB, I SEE HER SURE NUFF! OH AIN'T SHE A BEAUTY?
THERE SHE IS, TAISY. LOOK AT HER. OH GOLLY...
I'M GONNA FLY THE NEEDLE SOMEDAY, TAISY. I'M GONNA SIT RIGHT THERE IN FIRST CLASS WITH ALL THE OTHER RICH FOLK AND DRINK EXPENSIVE WINES AND RUN MY HAND ALONG THE LUSH RED UPHOLSTERY!
OH, ROB!
WILL YOU TAKE ME WITH YOU, ROB, WILL YOU?
COURSE I WILL! AIN'T I YER BEST PAL? AIN'T WE BLOOD BROTHERS FER EVER AND EVER? DIDN'T WE MAKE A PLEDGE OF FAITHFULLNESS UNDER THE BIG SYCAMORE IN BUTTER'S FIELD?
SURE, BUT...SOMEDAY... SOMEDAY YOU'LL GROW UP, ROB...SOMEDAY YOU'LL WANT A WIFE--A-A GIRL OF YER OWN KIND...
YER MY KIND! YER GONNA BE MY WIFE! IT'S YOU I WANT AND NOBODY ELSE!
DON'T SAY THAT! NEVER!
I-IT (SOB) WON'T WORK, ROB...WHAT ABOUT OUR CHILDREN?
WHAT ABOUT THEM? LISTEN, I DON'T CARE WHAT OTHER PEOPLE SAY, OR WHAT THEY THINK! IT'S YOU AND ME FOREVER, TAISY, YOU HEAR ME? JUST LIKE WE SWORE UNDER THE BIG SYCAMORE! YOU HEAR ME, TAISY? HUH?
...I...I HEAR YOU, ROB (SNIFF)...
WE'LL GO AWAY, TAISY, YOU AND ME...WE'LL GO AWAY ON THE SILVER NEEDLE! WE'LL RIDE FIRST CLASS ALL THE WAY. YOU'LL SEE! YOU'LL SEE, TAISY.

TARBOX WAS A LITTLE TOWN...A JERKWATER TOWN...SOME EVEN CALLED IT A BACKWARD TOWN... BUT IT WAS HOME! AND WE LOVED IT, TAISY AND ME...
TARBOX LIQUORS
MOST FOLK WOULD SAY THERE WASN'T NUTHIN TO DO IN TARBOX 'CEPT SIT AROUND THE CRACKER BARREL AT ED'S GENERAL AND CHEW THE FAT...
BUT TAISY AND ME, WE NEVER HAD NO PROBLEMS. WHEN WE GOT TIRED OF HEARIN THE LOCAL GOSSIP, WE'D GO OUT INTO MILLER'S SWAMP AND CHASE MARSH RATS..
AND WHEN WE GOT TIRED OF MARSH RATS, WE'D MAKE UP OUR OWN CRITTERS...
EEEK!
I'LL SAVE YA, M'AM!
ZAP!
GOT 'IM!
MY HERO!
YER SAFE NOW PRINCESS LANNA!
YOU MAY TAKE ME TO MY FATHER'S DOMAIN, PRINCE PHOEBUS!
TAISY'S FATHER'S DOMAIN WAS NUTHIN MORE THAN A TAROOFED HOVEL OUTSIDE OF TOWN.. THERE WAS A BARN NEXT TO IT. BUT MR. UKBLEY NEVER COULD AFFORD ANY LIVESTOCK.
3.

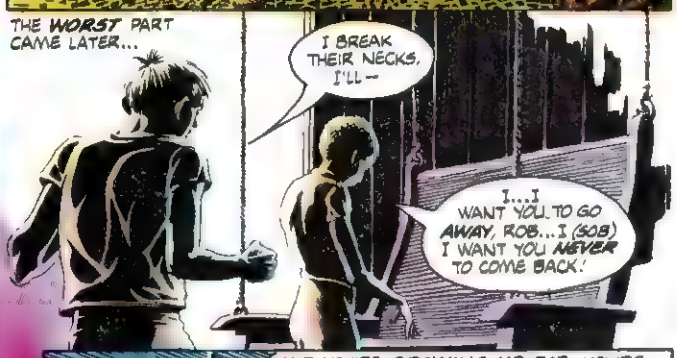
I LOVED OLD MR. UKELEY ALMOST AS MUCH AS I LOVED HIS DAUGHTER TAISY... AND I LOVED THE DARK AND TERRIFYING AND WONDEROUS TALES HE SPUN THERE IN THE WARMTH AND SECURITY OF HIS LITTLE FRONT ROOM...
...AND THE SIRENS OF ROMULUS II THAT NO MAN COULD RESIST AND NO MAN COULD SURVIVE...
...AND THEN THE DEMON-BATS FROM ALTAIR IV DESCENDED ON THE HELPLESS LITTLE SHIP...
WE EVEN LOVED SCHOOL, TAISY AND ME... EVEN THOUGH THAT'S WHERE MOST OF THE TROUBLE STARTED...
HEY WHITAKER! WHAT ARE YA DOIN WALKIN' WITH HER KIND? AIN'T YOU EVER HEARD THE FACTS OF LIFE?
HAR-HAR-HAR!
MEBE WHITAKER HANGS OUT WITH INFERIORS CAUSE HE CAN'T PLEASE THE OTHER GIRLS!
SHE'S NOT INFERIOR, DAMN YOU, SHE'S NOT!
ROB, NO!
GET HIM, BIFF! KNOCK HIS EARS BACK!
MY BRAVE PRINCE PHOEBUS!
NOBODY CALLS MY GIRLFRIEND INFERIOR!

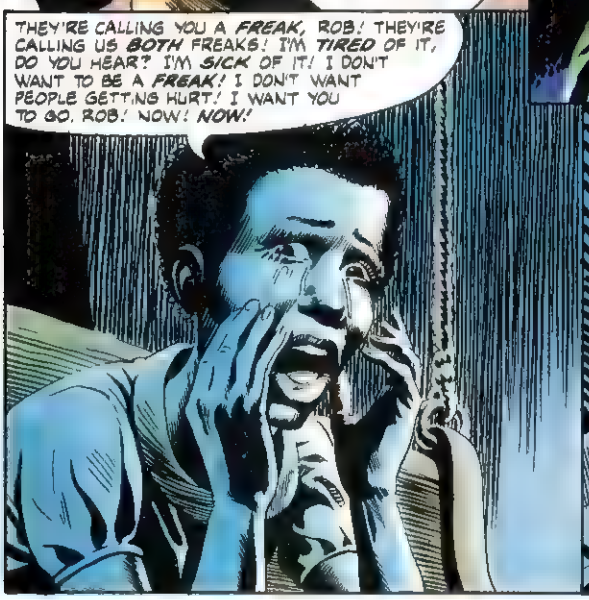
SCHOOL WAS SCHOOL...BUT SATURDAYS WERE SATURDAYS! TIME FOR MARSH RATS AND LEMONADE AND CANDY STORE LICORICE AND ROCKETS...AH, THE ROCKETS!
THERE SHE IS TAISY! THE SILVER NEEDLE! ALL WASHED AND SHINY AND READY TO LEAP UP AND SHAKE DOWN THE HEAVENS!
IT'S BEAUTIFUL, ROB!
...YOU'RE GETTING OLDER, SON, GROWING UP! TIME TO START THINKING OF COLLEGE... OF...GIRLS OF YOUR OWN KIND.
BUT I WANT TAISY. WE'RE GONNA BE MARRIED.
BUT ROB, DARLING, IT ISN'T--PRACTICAL, DON'T YOU SEE? YOU'LL WANT CHILDREN SOMEDAY, YOU'LL WANT--
I'LL WANT TAISY, TAISY! I'LL ALWAYS WANT HER! WE'RE GOING AWAY TOGETHER ON THE BIG SILVER NEEDLE.
THEN THERE CAME THE AWFUL NIGHT I PASSED BY TAISY'S PLACE AND FOUND OLD MAN UKELEY HEAVING WATER AT HIS SHED.
MR. UKELEY! MR. UKELEY! WHAT HAPPENED?
BUNCH OF YOUNG ROUGHNECKS...CAME ACROSS THE TRACKS YELLIN' AND WHOOPIN' ...CARRYING TORCHES...HOOLIGANS...
TAISY! WHERE'S TAISY?
TAISY WAS IN THE BARN ...WHERE THEY HAD CHASED HER...
TAISY! NO!
5.

IT TOOK US OVER TWO HOURS TO REASSEMBLE HER... LUCKILY NOTHING WAS SERIOUSLY DAMAGED...

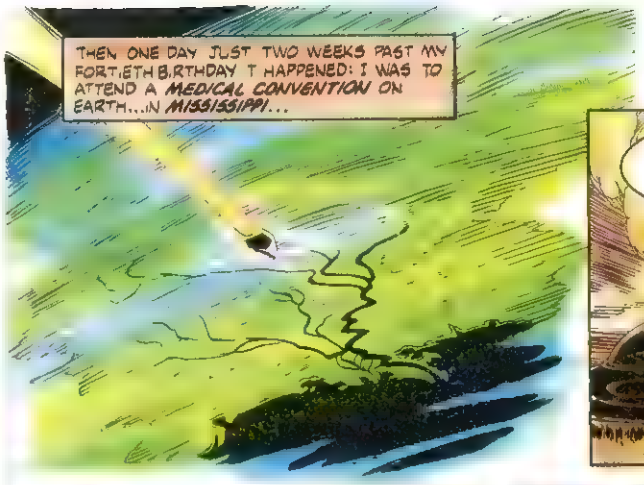


THE WORST PART CAME LATER...

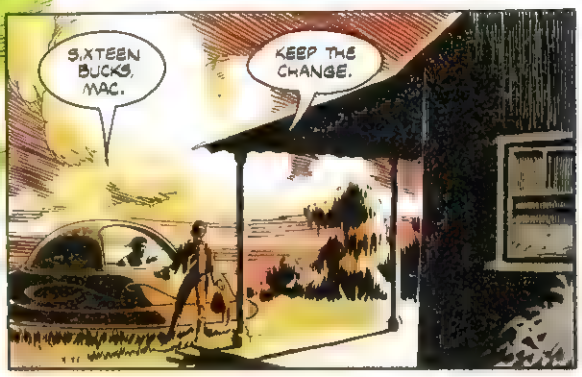




HERE, HERE, SONNY! WHERE DO YOU THINK YER GO'N'?
I (SOB) I'M GOING TO MARS, OR MAYBE SATURN! I'M GONNA RIDE THE SILVER NEEDLE! (SOB) WHERE IS IT?
THE SILVER NEEDLE? WHY, SHE'S IN DRY DOCK SON, AIN'T YOU HEARD? THEY SCRAPPED THE WHOLE FLEET! YEP, REPLACED HER LAST WEEK WITH ONE OF THE SMALLER ECONO LINES!
NO! (SOB-SOB) NO!!
I LAY IN SUTTER'S FIELD ALL NIGHT CRYING MY EYES OUT. WHEN THE DAWN SUN BROKE THROUGH THE STARS, I WALKED HOME TO MY PARENTS. I NEVER CROSSED THE TRACKS TO TAISY'S PLACE AGAIN...
A MONTH LATER WE MOVED TO VENUS... BUT NOT ABOARD THE SILVER NEEDLE. IT WAS GONE FOREVER. I ATTENDED A NEW SCHOOL, MADE NEW BOYFRIENDS..NEW GIRLFRIENDS ...STARTED COLLEGE...
MEDICINE FOUND ME. I WORKED HARD, GRADUATED WITH HONORS. I MARRIED A YOUNG WOMAN FROM CYLIS 12...WE HONEY-MOONED ON PHOBOS, EVENTUALLY SETTLING DOWN THERE...
MY PRACTICE FLOURISHED. I DID WELL. JEAN AND I HAD THREE CHILDREN. ALL BOYS. LIFE MOVED ALONG... I MOVED WITH IT...
ROB HONEY? (YAWN) IT'S 3 A.M.! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
NOTHING... WATCHING THE STARS...

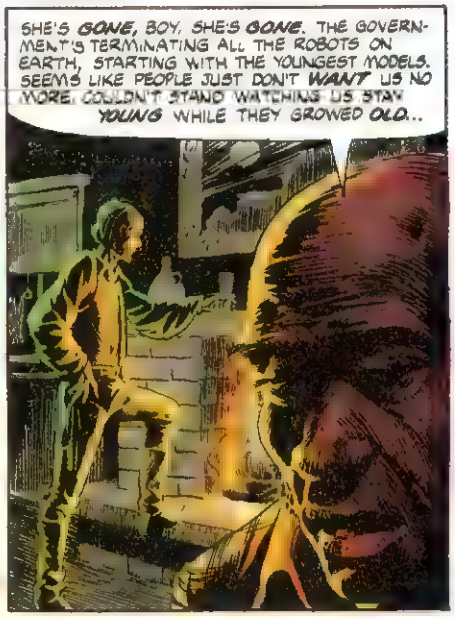


I COULDN'T BELIEVE HOW MUCH THE LITTLE TOWN OF TARBOX HAD CHANGED. AFTER THE CONVENTION I HAILED AN AERO-CAB AND HEADED FOR OLD MAN UKELBY'S ADDRESS...



TARBOX ON THE WHOLE HAD CHANGED RADICALLY...BUT SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE...

WE HAD A GLASS OF MR. UKELBY'S LEMONADE AND THEN HE DIDN'T KEEP ME IN SUSPENSE ANY LONGER...



TA.SY.
SHE DON'T WORK NO MORE, COURGE. THEY TOOK OUT HER CELLS. SHE'S LONG SINCE RUSTED ANYHOW... BUT, I DUNNO...GIVES ME KINDA COMFORT KNOWIN' SHE'S OUT HERE KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
MR. JKELEY, LISTEN TO ME. I'VE GOT PHOTO CELLS IN MY BAG! AND LIQUID STEEL! T'S STANDARD MEDICAL ISSUE NOW. MR. JKELEY WE CAN BRING HER BACK. WE CAN!
WE WORKED ALL NIGHT. I USED EVERY DROP OF OIL AND EVERY OUNCE OF SKILL I'D ACQUIRED OVER THE LONG YEARS OF MY OWN PRACTICE...
Y-YOU THINK SO SON? SHE'S BEEN SITTIN' HERE A LONG TIME...
HAND ME THAT TORCH...
WE TOOK HER APART AND REASSEMBLED HER THREE TIMES. THEN, JUST AT DAWN...
THAT'S T. I'VE DONE ALL I CAN. IF SHE DOESN T RESPOND WHEN I TURN HER ON...SHE NEVER WILL .
I FLIPPED THE LITTLE RED SWITCH .N HER BACK...
CLICK
...R-R-SP... NGG...NG...
HER EYES HALF OPENED...HER LIPS TREMBLED ONCE...BUT THAT WAS ALL...ONLY SILENCE FOLLOWED...
TOO LATE, MR. WHITAKER ...JEST TOO BLAMED LATE...AH SHUDDA TAKEN BETTER CARE OF HER...

WE WALKED FROM THE BARN...
THANKS FOR THE LEMONADE, MR. UKELEY...
MR. WHITAKER, SIR, WAIT A SPELL!
DON'T GO FEELIN' BAD ABOUT IT, SON; I GOTS TO TELL YOU SOMETHIN', I BEEN THINKIN': SHE AIN'T GONE, TAISY AIN'T GONE AT ALL. SHE WAS, UNTIL TONIGHT, BUT WE GOT HER BACK, DON'T YOU SEE?
TONIGHT WHEN WE WAS WORKIN AWAY IN THERE, I HAD HOPE AGAIN YES, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN YEARS! I HAD HOPE TAISY WOULD LIVE AGAIN AND THEN ALL A SUDDEN SHE DID LIVE AGAIN, IN MY MIND, IN MY MEMORIES! AND I THOUGHT TO MYSELF WHILE WE WAS WORKIN' IN THERE, I THOUGHT, IT DON'T MATTER IF SHE WAKES UP AGAIN OR NOT, CAUSE SHE AIN'T NEVER GONNA DIE IN MY MEMORIES. SHES GONNA BE WITH ME ALWAYS!
AIN'T THAT THE WAY IT IS, MR. WHITAKER; PLEASE TELL ME, I GOTS TO KNOW! I GOTS TO FEEL SHE'S STILL ALIVE! YOU GONNA BE GONE TOO SOMEDAY BUT I GOTS TO LIVE WITH IT FOREVER!
YEAH...THAT'S THE WAY IT IS, MR. UKELEY...SHE'S STILL ALIVE...
I CAUGHT A CAB BACK TO TOWN. THAT'S WHEN I SAW IT...
HEY. STOP THE CAB. LOOK AT THAT! THE SILVER NEEDLE! IT'S BACK!
YEAH, BROUGHT HER OUT OF DRY DOCK LAST WEEK. LOT OF PEOPLE MISSED HER, THEY SAY...
I GOT OUT AND RAN...I RAN THROUGH THE COOL SWEET GRASS OF SUTTER'S FIELD ...I RAN TOWARD THE ROCKETS AH, THE ROCKETS, ALL SHINY AND TALL AND SILVERY AND GLEAMING IN THEIR LAUNCH CRADLES... I RAN FOR ME AND TAISY...
Dedicated to Ray Krenkel

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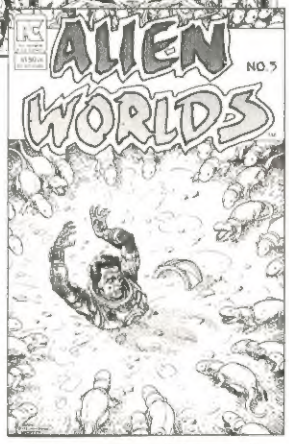

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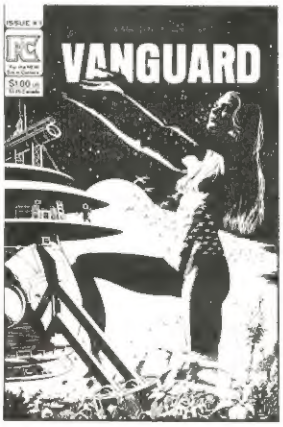

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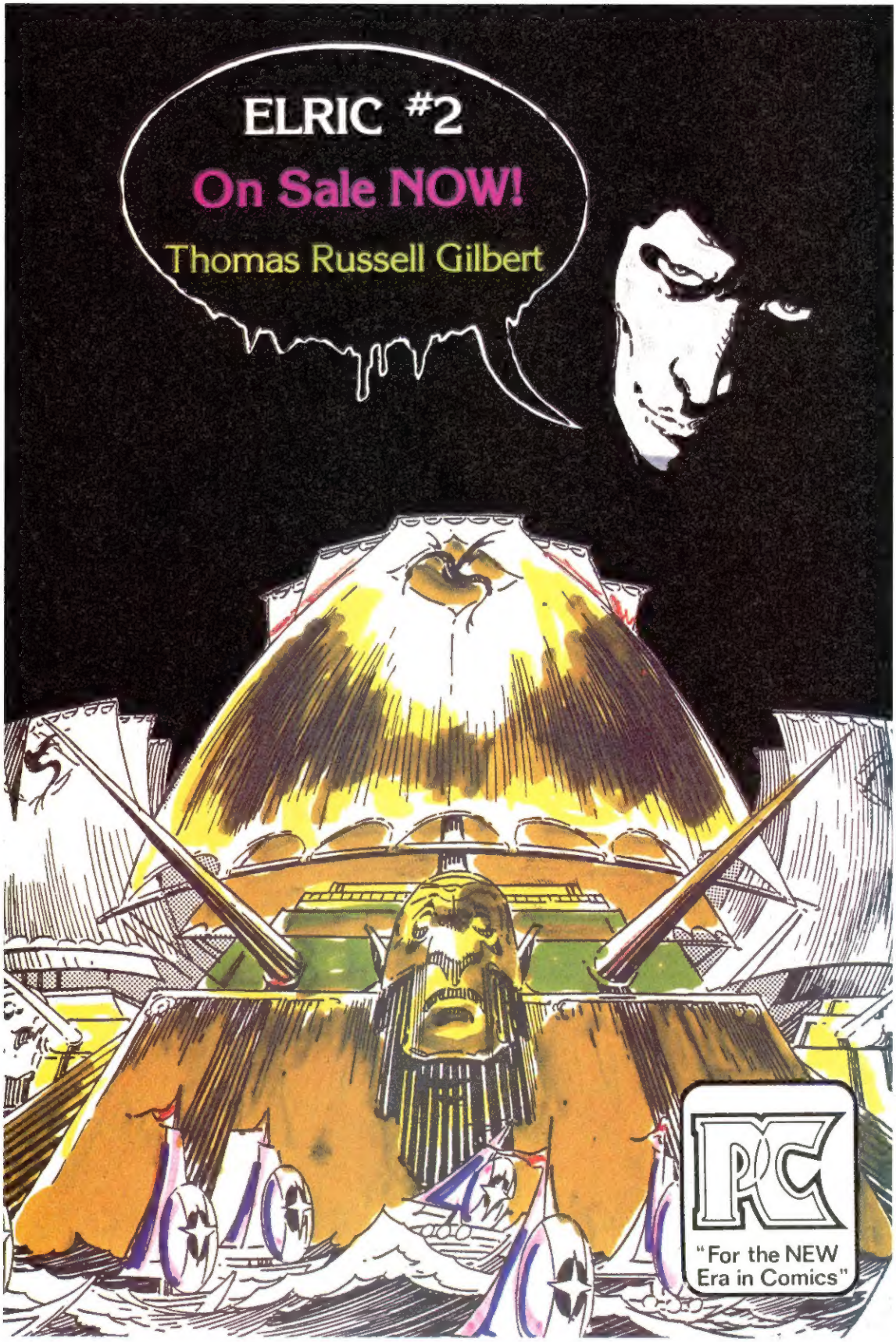
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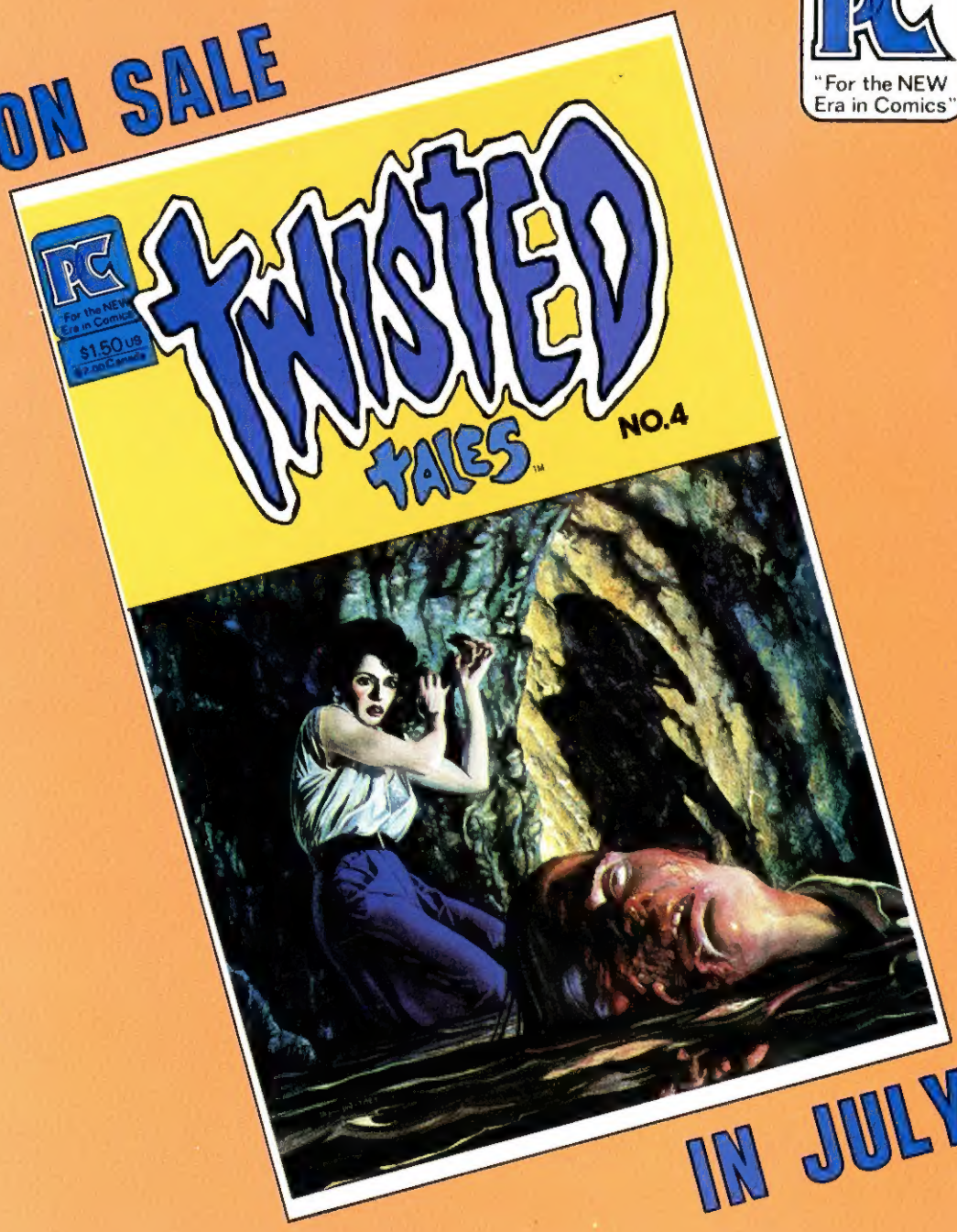

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